

Feet First

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Summary: We follow a UNSC Marine as he performs the first human test in an orbital insertion pod. CAUTION: Strong language is used, but no strong imagery.

Feet First

****BEGIN_PLAYBACK****

Why the hell did I volunteer for this? Am I crazy? I must be crazy. That's it. Lost my mind. That's all
>The world rocketed upward, the clouds nice fluffy clouds they are, maybe they'll cushion my fall a little slowly gaining resolution. The pod, a small prototype unit, was equipped with the best of the best materials and electronics, including a small interactive screen situated at face-level.

How nice of them, up at eye-level, right where my hands that are GRIPPING THE PADDING can get to easilly. Nice going brainiacs. Fucking scientists and their fucking ideas. "Oh! Maybe he'd like to LOOK outside while hurtling toward the Earth at Mach 15. Maybe he'd like to SEE what's past that nice little heat shield keeping him uncooked. How nice of us." Fuck them. That's it, it's all their fault I'm here. Not mine. Even though I'm crazy, maybe, kinda, well I'd have to be...

Situated in what could be called the cabin is a seat of sorts - a large chunk of padding made from nano-tube enhanced fibers, capable of withstanding _"...capable of withstanding impacts in excess of 60k Newtons and able to fit most individuals between the heights of 1.25 and 2.25 meters and masses of 50 and 120 kilograms. Lucky, LUCKY me. I fit right in a nice sweet spot there, don't I? Hell, I drew a fucking STRAW to get this "honor" as they keep calling it. The guys wanted to go, all of us did. None of us really knew what would be going on. Too late now, right?_

The pod is outfitted with prototype connectivity to any armor units that would be tailored to the pods. These include, but are not

limited to, body function monitors _holy shit, is that my heart rate or my ZIP code?_, integrated radio communications (for limited communication while above and below the ionosphere) _static, static, more static, ALIEN INVASION, static, static..._, and impact sensors designed to stabilize the pod based on the movement of the occupant inside _I'm sure the teeth that are rattling out of my head aren't needed. Detached corneas would be welcome at this point_.

When the entry vehicle arrives in the landing zone, the occupant has a set of buttons next to both of their hands. One button opens the pod via hydraulics opening from the top like a seed. _I wonder what happens if I just get out the easy way now. It looks so damn peaceful outside, I just want to join those wonderful looking dark clouds 50 fucking kilometers away._

The second button opens the pod using small, shaped explosive charges, capable of removing the door to the pod and up to 1 meter of regular debris (see Testing Logs for details). This is only to be used in case the hydraulics fail to function due to impact-sustained damage. _Maybe I can surf the door, that'd be awesome. Surfing clouds, with no parachute. Am I really getting this desperate? Yes, yes I am._

The previous 2 buttons will only activate upon internal accelerometers registering no descent in progress, and while not connected to shipboard electronic systems, to limit the number of fatalities incurred. _FUCKING SHIT, WHY WON'T EITHER BUTTON GO DOWN?! FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU! FUCK YOU ALL! LET ME OUT OF THIS METAL COFFIN!_

A third button will trigger an emergency beacon, located on the top of the pod. It includes a small LED array (5x White Light, 5x Infrared, 5x Ultraviolet) allowing for location in all environments and conditions.

The pod has finally entered the thicker portion of the atmosphere. Upon encountering a resistance resembling atmosphere around 15 km from the surface of the planet, a series of fins, situated on the outside of the pod spread to begin to slow descent. This occurs rather quickly, and a small jolt may be associated with it. _THE BUTTONS AREN'T WORKING! THE BUTTONS AREN'T FUCKING WORKING! Wait... they told me this earlier, maybe, right? HOLY SHIT COCKS! I think my nuts are in my throat now. That was a fuck of a stop... but I'm still dropping. Shit. What a pretty white cloud I'm rocketing toward. Fuck it's getting hot in here._

At this point, the pod may begin to warm up, since the ceramic tiles on the bottom can handle a lot of thermal load, they are not infallible At between 10 and 8 km from the surface of the planet, 3 compressed parachutes will eject from the top of the pod, slowing the pod down to speeds in excess of Mach 3. This will be accompanied by a sudden pop and another small jolt. _"...it's the end of the world as we know it, and I feel fiiiiinnneeeeeeeeeeeFUCK! Is God lighting firecrackers on my head now? Wouldn't that be the icing on the c-DAMNIT! I THINK I BROKE MY NOSE! FUCKIN PARACHUTES! Look at that, I fucking cracked the screen with my face. Fucking fantastic._

At around 3km from the surface, the parachutes will detach. Then, at 1km, the small thrusters situated underneath the ceramic plating will fire their shaped charges, and ignite to allow for a slow descent to

the surface, usually embedding the bottom half of a meter of the pod in the material (see Testing Logs for more details). The jolt is usually within tolerable human limits for all but stone, where some fractures may occur.

Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay. I'm okay, I'm alright. I'm okay, I'm alright. The parachutes aren't here anymore. The light for them went off. My face is on fire. My lungs are on fire. My chest is on fire. The air is on fire. They said that if I made it this far, it's better than the last 14 tests. Okay, I'm alive. Just breathe. It'll be all over soon. Either I'm dying or I'm getting out of here in one piece... or more. Okay, altimeter says I'm a klick from the surface. 900 meters. 800 meters. 700 me-FUCK THE SHITLORDS! Oh, the rockets saving me from death. Right. I knew that. They said try to aim for something soft, like trees or sand. Wait, how the fuck do I steer. There's no control stick... oh those fucking jokers. I'm going to kill those eggheads if I live.

Once the pod has made landfall, retrieval teams will arrive at the specific location of the pod to retrieve the pod, any pieces that may have detached, and the test personnel and equipment inside. Injuries and medical issues will be attended to as needed and all testing materials will be uploaded via satellite link upon completion.

Is that fucking rock? That's rock. It's official: I'm dying. Horrible horrible dropped-from-motherfucking-space death. That's what I want on my tombstone. "He died jumping from space in a small pod for science." Get that you little bastard camera? I know you're watching. 100 meters, 50 meters, 25 meters, and...FUCKSHITFUCKSHITFUCKSHITFUCK SHIT! MY LEGS! HOLY SHIT ON A DAMNED ROLL OF FUCKING HELL! AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH! I THINK MY RIGHT KNEE IS FUCKING GONE! AHHH! WORK YOU DAMN DOOR, WORK! THERE IT GOES! FINALLY, let's get out of this fucking...

END_PLAYBACK

* * *

><p>[Test Log 2519-07-02-18:22]

Subject Information:

ALL DATA REDACTED AT SUBJECT REQUEST

Subject Affiliation:

United Nations Space Command

Subject Rank:

Lieutenant

Test Conditions:

Prototype Single Occupant Exoatmospheric Insertion Vehicle, Mark XI. Outfittings available in DES-SOEIV-11.

Retrival Conditions:

Subject landed at LOCATION DATA REDACTED amidst some rocky

formations. The door was found 20 meters away from the pod, evidence that the shaped charges were detonated. (Upon inspection of the pod later, the hydraulics seemed in functioning order, review of video pending.) The subject was found under a nearby tree, blood visible on his face, strongly indicative of a broken nose, as well as nursing his right leg. (His right kneecap was later found to be shattered, as well as minor fractures in both ankles, several strained muscles in his back and legs, and effects consistent with a compressed spine.) Visible injuries were cleaned and treated, and his leg was splinted. The pod and all affects were retrieved without any complications.

Design Revisions:

Based this test, numerous revisions may be required to make entry more survivable. The injuries sustained by Lt. NAME REDACTED were unacceptable for normal field operations. In-flight controls and alternate screen placement and controls are also under consideration. See full design considerations in DES-SOEIV-12.

Final Notes:

After the subject came down from what can be considered an adrenaline high, the following audio was recorded:

"...okay then. That was kinda fun actually. It's like a badge of courage to survive that shit. I don't know how you'll find sonofabitches that would ride this, but I'm sure that whoever you get would scare the enemy so bad they'd give up to the Marine god who landed in their midst. If this becomes some special unit, sign me up. I thought I was crazy before; I now know I am. I rode feet first into hell and survived. I can't wait to do it again."

End
file.